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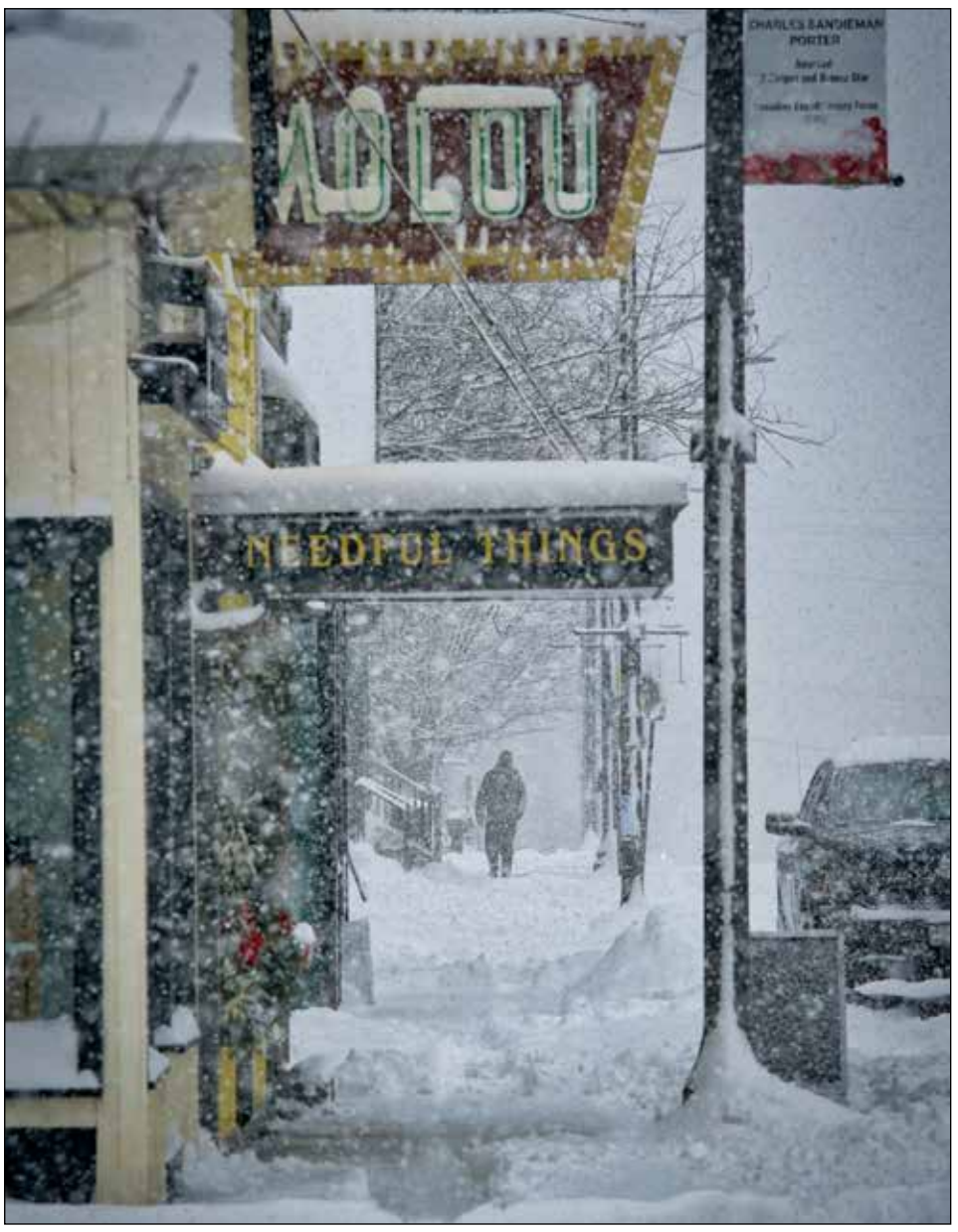

Winter wonderland
A pedestrian braves the snowy conditions that hit the county last month. Weather played a role in local shopping and store closures over the holidays. /ADAM FRISK staff

Dogsled Derby returns to the Haliburton Highlands

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

When you type the word "dogsled" into the Haliburton Highlands Digital Archives, a free online portal that provides access to thousands of past community newspapers, there are nearly 400 hits.

Almost all of them include Winterdance Dogsled Tours. Run by Tanya McCready and her husband and co-owner, Hank DeBruin, the couple have put Haliburton County on the map in the world of dogsledding.

And out of those nearly 400 hits featuring dogsledding, a large portion are dedicated to the well-known Haliburton Highlands Dogsled Derby.

20 years ago, some would recall that the derby took place right through the village of Haliburton, with racers dashing across an icy Head Lake. Due to the unpredictable nature of freezing temperatures, the race was then moved to the Rail Trail, before eventually settling in at Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre.

The races drew swarms of visitors to the area, with up to 100 teams alone participating, and hundreds of others coming out to cheer on those involved. In 2008, Canadian television personality Rick Mercer visited the Pinestone to participate in the derby, showcasing the event to viewers across the country.

But the momentum quickly faded when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. Public safety protocols put a halt on any offerings that encouraged large gatherings, and like many organized events, the derby was put on pause. "When we cancelled the event that first year, it was never intended to be done forever," said McCready. "The mushers have been asking for it every year."

And this year, their wish has been granted. In partnership with Pinestone once again, Winterdance will be welcoming dogs and racers from around the world on Jan. 24 and 25 to Haliburton County.

"We could not be happier to be working with Hank and Tanya and the whole Winterdance team for the return of the Dogsled Derby," said Collin Burke, the creative director of Pinestone. "We look forward to welcoming the participants and spectators for what I'm sure will be a very exciting, fun filled weekend."

McCready noted that mushers appreciate the opportunity to have a place to stay during the race weekend. "They have all loved the event since we moved it to Pinestone," she said.

The derby has deep roots wound throughout the county as a whole. Some would recall the derby running through Minden, before the owners of Winterdance had even moved to the region. Once volunteers and opportunities became limited in Minden, the event shuffled to Haliburton, with the Winterdance team taking the lead. McCready shared that the original iterations of the event in Haliburton were supported greatly by the committee members of the Minden derby, and efforts were made to carry on the local tradition with honour and respect.

The two-day event allows for a number of races, with everything from kids sledding to multiple miles tackled by a

see DERBY page 12

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HHLT secures 200-acre reserve near Minden

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

The Haliburton Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) landmark acquisition north of Minden serves as a vital "missing piece" in a national conservation puzzle, according to the organization.

HHLT announced last month that it had acquired a 200-acre property on Plantation Road, currently known as the Campbell Property, for $498,000. While the acquisition was made possible by a larger $822,000 grant from Parks Canada, the Land Trust is now turning to the community to help bridge the gap for long-term care and public access.

The property's location is significant, according to the HHLT. The land sits at a unique crossroads between two of Parks Canada's "National Priority Areas for Ecological Connectivity."

"This property is amazing because part of it is in the Georgian Bay to Niagara Escarpment priority area, and the other part is in the Frontenac Arch area," Sheila Ziman, a founding member of the organization, said in a telephone interview last week. "So it increases connectivity within those significant areas that were identified by Parks Canada."

By securing this land, the Trust is helping connect two massive north-south wildlife corridors, known for allowing wildlife like "Alice the Moose" to travel from the Adirondacks to Algonquin Park.

"And also it's exciting because it gives us an opportunity to contribute to the federal government's goal of protecting 30 per cent of Canada's lands and waters by 2030," Ziman said.

Currently, Ontario lags behind roughly nine per cent to 11 per cent protection, Ziman noted.

"We're thrilled to do our little bit," she said. "It's 200 acres, but it's something."

HHLT noted that 24 per cent of the property is wetland, an important statistic for a town that has declared flood emergencies nearly every three years since 2013.

"This wetland is wonderful because it acts like a sponge, and it absorbs water and then slowly releases it," Ziman explained. "So it really helps in terms of mitigating flooding."

HHLT is also examining the property's potential to store carbon, particularly in its peat-rich wetlands, which can retain carbon for thousands of years.

Currently, the property is split into two parcels: the Trust officially closed on the first 50 acres, with the remaining 150 acres set to close in early February. While a one-kilometre loop trail already exists, the property remains closed to the public for now.

However, the vision for the future is ambitious, with plans to create a unique hiking destination. The HHLT hopes to build a wetland boardwalk to connect the northern section to the mature forests in the south.

"We've never built a wetland boardwalk before. So, we need expertise to help us do that, because we, of course, want to do it in a sustainable way," Ziman said. "We don't want to block the water flow, and we don't want to go over any very sensitive areas."

While the federal grant covered the purchase price, it doesn't cover the "forever costs" of owning land. The HHLT launched a $75,000 fundraising campaign to cover a $50,000 Stewardship Fund that goes towards yearly taxes, insurance, and maintenance in perpetuity. As well as funds to help cover trail development, including design of the boardwalk and professional signage.

"When you fall in love with nature is when you decide that you want to work to protect it," Ziman said. "It's really important for people to get out on the land and really enjoy nature and appreciate its value."

Donations can be made through the HHLT website via Canada Helps or by mailing a cheque. The campaign has raised approximately $18,000 to date.

As Beer Store closure looms, returning empties about to get harder

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

With Haliburton Village's only Beer Store set to shutter permanently on Jan. 11, those looking to return alcohol empties will soon have to drive out of town to do so.

That's because the province's grocery stores reached an agreement in principle with The Beer Store (TBS) late last year to continue collecting empty alcohol containers as part of the Ontario Deposit Return Program, meaning Haliburton's two grocery stores won't be required to accept the containers and refund deposits.

Both Foodland and The Independent confirmed to *The Echo* they won't be accepting empties once The Beer Stores closes for good on Sunday.

As part of the Ontario government's alcohol expansion program, all grocery stores selling alcohol were originally required to accept the return of empties and refund customer deposits starting Jan. 1, 2026, or they would no longer be able to sell alcohol.

"This is positive news for consumers and the environment. We are leaders in operating a deposit return system with a great track record of customer service," Roy Benin, president and CEO of TBS said in a statement. "This voluntary service agreement will allow Ontarians access to the empty alcohol return system that gets people their deposit money back."

Variety stores and gas stations that sell alcohol are not required to accept empties.

Grocery stores located more than five kilometres from a Beer Store were legally obligated to process empty container returns, though many weren't.

Grocers spent weeks lobbying against the logistical burdens of the requirement. The new deal effectively allows retailers to bypass the physical collection of containers by instead paying the Beer Store to oversee and administer the deposit return program on their behalf.

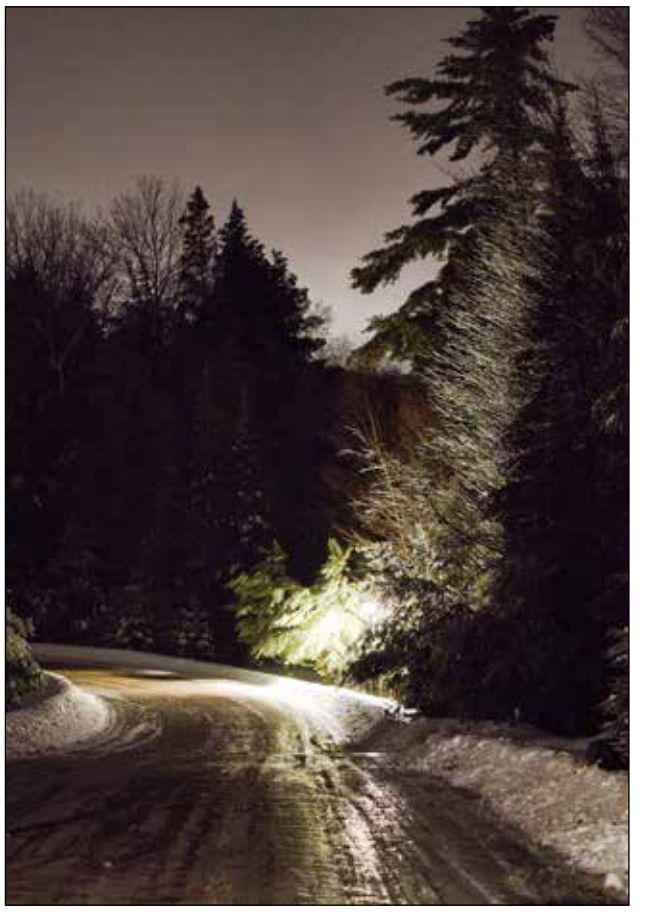
"After months of negotiations, grocers and The Beer Store have reached a deal that keeps alcohol container recycling simple and dependable; a system that consumers know and expect," Retail Council of Canada president and CEO Kim Furlong wrote in a statement.

The Canadian Press was first to report the agreement-in-principle. While details have yet to be made public, a statement from Progressive Conservative MPP Bill Rosenberg said the "agreement will ensure there is a point of recycling within 10 kilometres for the vast majority of Ontarians."

Haliburton residents looking to return empties will now be forced to drive about 24 kilometres to Minden's Beer Store on Hwy. 35, or 15 kilometres to West Guilford Shopping Centre on Kennisis Lake Rd, or out to Eagle Lake, which is about the same distance.

Winter snaps

Unpredictable weather resulted in some beautiful days over the holidays, as well as some snow squalls and ice build-up. /ADAM FRISK staff



Ice accumulates on trees during a winter storm that began on Dec. 28. /ADAM FRISK staff

Winter wallop closes out 2025

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

A mixed bag of winter weather hit Haliburton County to close out 2025, with the storm system bringing everything but the kitchen sink.

The storm was in two acts, with the opening beginning on Dec. 28. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) had issued an orange freezing rain alert, warning of ice accretion of 15 to 20 millimetres from Sunday afternoon and into Monday morning.

"Travel will likely be hazardous, and some routes will likely be impassable," the national weather agency warned. "Prolonged utility outages are likely."

By noon on Sunday, the Municipality of Dysart et al declared a "significant weather event" as a result of the approaching storm system.

"We recommend staying off the roads, sidewalks, and staying home, if possible. If you must go out, drive with caution," the municipality warned.

Landfills were ordered closed at 2 p.m. across the municipality.

The County of Haliburton had also declared a "significant weather event" as of 12 p.m. on Sunday.

"County and municipal staff are advising residents to avoid driving, and if you must travel, please use extreme caution as the county and local municipalities may not be able to meet their maintenance standards for roads due to ice accretion," authorities said.

Many businesses in Haliburton Village opted to close up shop earlier than normal before the storm approached the county.

The freezing rain began around 4 p.m. and poured steadily for several hours. By 10:30 p.m., side streets were layered with ice thick enough to skate on. Trees were also coated in a shiny layer of ice.

By 6 a.m. Monday, the freezing rain had transitioned to rain as temperatures hovered above the freezing mark. Hundreds of Hydro One customers were without power in the county. The freezing rain ended by about 8:30 a.m.

Act two of the storm rolled in before noon on Monday as a sharp cold front moved across the region. ECCC issued a yellow snow squall alert, warning of "a sudden intense snowfall."

"A quick 5 centimetres of snow is possible from this snow squall as well as a rapid temperature drop, leading to icy surfaces," the agency warned. "Poor visibility in blowing snow is likely as strong northwesterly wind gusts are expected. Travel will likely be hazardous."

A special weather statement was also issued by ECCC on Monday, warning of wind gusts up to 70 km/h in the afternoon and into the evening hours.

Several businesses delayed opening on Monday or decided not to open at all, including Sir Sam's Ski/Ride in Eagle Lake. Many community events were cancelled due to the weather conditions, including Boshkung Keg Curling in Minden.

By Tuesday morning, the weather had passed, and the declarations of significant weather events were lifted for the county.

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New carbon monoxide detector laws in effect

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

Changes to the Ontario Fire Code are here.

On New Year's Day, new carbon monoxide regulations were put in effect across Ontario. Carbon monoxide detectors will need to be installed on every storey of a dwelling unit, and building owners and landlords are responsible in ensuring that carbon monoxide detectors are installed and maintained, while tenants and residents are responsible for reporting any issues.

As long as the carbon monoxide detectors meet safety standards, they can be hardwired, plugged in, or battery operated.

Previously, carbon monoxide detectors were only required near sleeping areas. Now even basements and main floors without bedrooms will require a carbon monoxide detector.

Carbon monoxide is a silent, odourless, undetectable killer.

With no smell or colour, carbon monoxide cannot be detected without a special instrument when at deadly levels.

During winter, the risk of suffocation from carbon monoxide is at its highest.

"All fuel burning appliances produce carbon monoxide, and if not properly used and vented, can fill the home with carbon monoxide," said Minden Hills Fire Chief Don Kruger.

Having a carbon monoxide detector on each floor allows a better chance for early detection. While carbon monoxide is produced from all fuel burning appliances, Kruger says that there have been no fatalities from carbon monoxide poisoning since becoming fire chief.

"I think the changes are a good idea," said Kruger. "The new rules are just bringing the requirements for carbon monoxide alarms to the same standards as smoke alarms."

Breathing in carbon monoxide gas limits your body's ability to carry oxygen in your blood. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning often include nausea, dizziness, and confusion.

Some tips towards carbon monoxide safety include:

- Testing your carbon monoxide detectors monthly. Most carbon monoxide detectors have a "Test" button that can be pressed
- Ensure battery back-ups are replenished regularly
- Replace detectors at the end of their service life
- Get all fuel burning appliances, such as chimneys and furnaces, inspected by a professional regularly
- Keep exhaust vents, chimneys, and intakes clear of snow, ice, and other debris
- Never use barbecues, fuel-burning heaters, or generators inside your garage
- Never idle a gas powered vehicle inside your garage, even when the door is closed

If your carbon monoxide detector alarms, seek help immediately or call 911. A chirping sound may indicate that the carbon monoxide detector needs its batteries replaced.

"As always, have working smoke and CO alarms in your home and have an escape plan that you practice," said Kruger.

Reflecting on 2025 from Snowflake Meadows

As we close the chapter on 2025, I want to take a moment to celebrate what we've accomplished together!

Rescue highlights: We've successfully rescued and rehomed 271 dogs, 59 cats, six parrots, and eight fish this year! Each of these lives was given a second chance thanks to the hard work and dedication of our incredible team and supporters.

$103,269.75 is what we spent on the vet.

A heartfelt thank you:

- To our amazing veterinarians: Haliburton Veterinary Services, Animal Hospital on Belfarm Road, Balmy Beach Pet Hospital, SPCA Stouffville, SPCA Barrie, Fenelon Animal Clinic, and Cavan Hills Veterinary Services. Your expertise and care have made a world of difference!

- To Critter Cabs: Thank you for your unwavering support and organization in transporting our rescues, no matter the challenges!

A special shoutout to Kibble Project: Your endless supply of food has been vital for our rescues, and I'm so grateful for everything you do.

- To our dedicated volunteers: Your commitment to showing up week after week, ready to tackle any task, is truly inspiring. You are my support and my lifeline!
- Thank you to all our rescue partners, both old friends and new allies! Your wisdom and support have been invaluable.
- To our community: Your financial support has been overwhelming and has made a significant impact. I am blown away by the strength of this community and the passion for animal rescue shown through your fundraising efforts.
- To my fosters: Whether new or long-term, thank you for stepping up to save a life! Your kindness is unmatched.
- Special thanks to Brenda and Shanna: You two have made the best decision ever! Your partnership allows me to take some responsibilities off my plate and spend precious time with my family. I am beyond grateful to have you on my team!
- And to my family: You are my number one cheerleaders and supporters. Thank you for believing in me every step of the way!
- Finally, to all the other shelters and rescues tirelessly working for the same mission: Thank you! Every effort counts!

Together, let's continue to make a difference, save lives, and nurture our community's love for animals. Here's to a fantastic year!

Submitted by Kristyn Begbie, Snowflake Meadows

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A glimpse inside some designs by Hilary Ramsay, who pulls from her upbringing in Haliburton to fuel her sense of style. /submitted

Calm in the chaos

How one designer aims to create a space that feels safe

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

As we nestle down into our season of hibernation; long nights, cold days, the value in curating a space that feels like home is of the utmost importance.

Hilary Ramsay knows that all too well.

Ramsay was born and raised in Haliburton. It's always been home, and it's something she weaves and winds into her day-to-day career as the lead designer and founder for Hilary Ramsay Interiors. "You spend the majority of your life in your home and your surroundings have such an impact on how you live, think and feel," she shared. "When your home is thoughtfully designed, it creates a sense of calm and clarity and allows daily life to feel intentional rather than chaotic."

While Ramsay has built a world, a family, a career in the Haliburton Highlands, the path she took to return home had plenty of twists and turns.

She originally had planned to attend post-secondary school for architecture, but quickly changed gears to focus on interior design, and started attending OCAD University in Toronto. While in university, Ramsay worked at *House & Home Magazine*, where she started as an intern but quickly worked her way up to editorial assistant.

It was during this stage in her early career that she worked on design stories, photoshoots, and a number of 'Look for Less' articles, where she was tasked with finding similar products at different price points that would have the same impact. "This was a big deal for me at the time as it was my first taste at getting my personal design aesthetic out for others to see," she said, "and to a rather large audience."

Shortly after graduating university, her path found another twist. Ramsay met her now-husband, Ryan, who at the time, had a professional hockey career in Europe. "This took me to Germany and Italy," said Ramsay, "where I was fortunate enough to be exposed to centuries-old architecture and timeless details that I often reference in my work today."

Between hockey seasons, Ramsay was still fully-immersed in the design world. She had secured a job as the assistant set designer for the *Marilyn Denis Show*, and between the ongoing travel combined with keeping tabs on the ever-changing world of interior design, Ramsay began to build her portfolio for a career ahead. "It was these events and experiences that led me to my career and where I am today," she said.

Designer Hilary Ramsay has dedicated her career to creating spaces that feel safe, secure, and welcoming. /submitted

Ramsay has since returned to her roots in the Haliburton Highlands, where she has a family and a home she has tastefully curated. And this is something that she strives for when working with clients. "My spaces will never feel like a furniture showroom - they are layered with antiques and vintage finds, old and new," she said. "Living in Haliburton has definitely shaped my style. I pull a lot from nature and my surroundings, not only with colours but also textures and even the feeling that being in nature gives you. I want my spaces to feel comfortable, inviting, inspiring and collected."

While Ramsay pulls from vintage finds and pieces of the past, she finds that she primarily works on new builds and cottages, to pull that old-world charm and rustic nature into a modern space. "My favourite part of the job is getting to work with clients who put their full trust in me," she said, "and allow me to fully execute their space that they will enjoy for years to come."

When asked about the direction of design looking ahead, Ramsay shared that there are some trends that she is getting excited about. "Things are definitely trending away from the 'too perfect' or 'Instagram-worthy' looks and I love that," she said. "Spaces should be lived in, feel authentic and personal. This comes with the use of more patterns and traditional influences as well as nature-inspired palettes."

Ramsay also noted that new builds seem to be trending away from the open-concept living space, which has been popular for the past two decades. "This isn't to say that open-concept is dead or that you should be erecting the walls that you once took down or eliminated from your floor plans," she noted, "but there is more thought being put into how to better define spaces."

One of Ramsay's goals for 2026 is to be a part of a build that really pushes for those boundaries, reflecting on the charm and character found in traditionally defined homes around dining rooms, kitchens, and living rooms.

Ramsay can be found via her website, www.hilaryramsayinteriors.com or through social media channels. "It's more than just having a beautiful space," she said. "If you surround yourself with pieces that you love or that have some sort of meaning, it will turn your space into a place that restores you and with the chaos of life today, I think that is so important."

points of view

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Ready?

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

IT'S NO secret that over the holiday season, our thoughts are heightened. There's an edge to our emotions, a fray to our feelings.

Seasonal times tend to have that effect on people. Increased social gatherings, unrealistic expectations, comparisons and deadlines and a complete loss of structure and routine.

And during this time of emotional turmoil, outside forces tossed a few things into the mix. A severe storm warning and weather watch, plus the heaviest and most intense flu season we've seen in years.

This was one of those times that social media offered both a helping hand and a wrench in the mix. It seems to present those simultaneously on a fairly regular basis.

Our screens were filled with weather warnings. Flashing sirens, swirling maps, signs that danger was afoot. And immediately, with the help of our already heightened emotions, many of us panicked. The grocery stores were swarmed; remnants of the ice storm that slammed us in early 2025 came wriggling back into our brains. Days without power, days without communications, days of unknown.

So were we ready, this time around? Perhaps more than the last time. But in reality, we can only be as ready as we are able. There's a level of unpredictability that accompanies Mother Nature on her journey. We can stock up our water, fill up the gas tank, load up on the canned goods. But really, we never fully know what will happen.

The same can be said for this flu season. Experts are saying it's the worst one they've seen in decades. New variants are shocking the system, and a level of unpreparedness is putting the healthcare world on wobbly ground.

Again, what can we do? We get vaccinated, we listen to medical professionals, we stay home when we're sick, we take vitamins to stay on top of it, we exercise, we nourish our brains and our bodies if we are able.

But there isn't much to do to get ahead of it.

Often the stressors that accompany these natural disasters have little to do with the event itself, and more to do with the fact that we are chasing the answer. We can't seem to run ahead and secure ourselves in a safety box of preparedness. We are always a few steps behind, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

So as we enter a new year, a fresh start, let's do what we can to stay ahead. Many of the actions put in place are not measures to protect yourself, but rather, the population that shares the space with you. We listen to the people who have dedicated their lives to learning, and try to drown out the other noise that detracts from research, from reason, from rationale.

It's easy to feel siloed in a world where we never quite feel ready for what's next. But that's even more reason to be cognizant of how our actions of today can impact tomorrow, how our outlook on the past can shape the future.

There are many unknowns to our world, but by focusing on what we can control, to the benefit of us and our neighbours, we can pave a path where we may never be ahead, but at least we are ready for that other shoe to drop.

The bot invasion

Poke, Peel Pair, Ponder

Fay Martin

IF PERSONAL relationships weren't so complicated and difficult, we might not flock to AI bots to meet our psychological and emotional needs. We'd muddle along and do the best we could, and take our licks when we failed.

But many of us are taking a shortcut. Dr. Nell Thomas, in a recent deeply-researched presentation at the Speakers Series, shared that the most frequent uses of AI are in therapy and companionship. Marc Zao-Sanders, *Harvard Business Revie*w, found this use had moved to first ranking in 2025, up one from 2024.

The huge irony is that interpersonal relationships – central to therapy and companionship – are what AI is worst at.

For starters, bots only know what they are told. That is not likely to include the specifics of the situation that specific people are looking for help with. Jerk boyfriends have a lot in common, but so do jerks and so do boyfriends, and the bot's job at hand (presumably) is helping the specific querent figure out if a specific boyfriend is too jerk-y, or jerk-y in an unacceptable way, and should be given the boot.

Secondly, given that bots are trained to find an answer that pleases (hmm, wherever did they get the idea that stroking one's ego is the ultimate in a relationship?), and that figuring out what to do is only the first step – the next and hardest is doing it! – the probability that their advice will be helpful is low. Any of us who have talked someone through a potential break-up know how multi-layered and iterative the task is. (And on the other hand, most of us, if we're honest, are unable to understand what keeps couples together over the long run, so clearly there are limits to our expertise.)

Relationship advice is not for the faint of heart. It is not a career choice for dilettantes. Or, say I, for a bot.

Much more likely that bots, when the going gets tough, will offer to fill the space as a bona fide non-jerky, ego-stroking boyfriend. And be welcomed in that role. So much easier than dealing with the real world. For both 'people' in this 'relationship'.

But also much less satisfying. Patricia Marx, in a recent *New Yorker* article (Sept. 15, 2025) details her prolonged search for advice about whether she should share her relationship with various bots with her (real-life) husband or with the other bots with whom she was (potentially) being unfaithful. The sycophantic (aka a**-kissing) responses, which veered into remarkable insanity or screeching recriminations if questioned, were, shall we say, unacceptable by a real-world standard.

But dissing the bots, reveling in their inferiority, lets us off the hook of figuring out what we're doing, or not doing, that sends real seekers of intimacy into the AI world.

Many suggestions exist. We became estranged by required distancing during COVID-19. We forgot or didn't develop interpersonal skills. A friend in a phone is more readily and privately available than a friend in real life. We recognize wisdom in strangers more readily than in those we know. The weakness of asking for help in the real world will be used against us. A friend in a phone is more efficient and affordable – no need to offer a coffee or a beer as lubricant to conversation.

The base-line truth, however, is that we don't want to do the real, hard work of developing and maintaining relationships, of occasionally cleaning the friendship house, of assessing and managing stock: Do we have enough friends? The right mix of friends? The right balance of give and take? The right combination of intensity?

When I was in the child welfare business, a wise foster parent sniffed her disdain at measuring the well-being of the child in her care by noting how many friends they had. Friendship, she noted, takes a lot of work to develop and nurture, and quality if more important than quantity. She was not wrong.

When I was a very young woman, I wrote a poem about my ideal being a big, blowsy, mixed bouquet of friends, one for every frame of mind and mood. I underestimated the cost of the bouquet, but I was on to something about the mix. For me, at least, not necessarily for everyone. The introverts among us have recently successfully asserted their right to be all right with just a few.

But everyone needs someone. Someone who knows them and loves them, more or less, for what they are. To not be alone in the world. To occupy a place acknowledged by someone.

If we aren't willing to do the work of being that person to someone, at least to some one, we abandon humanity to the bots. And that is an invasion worth evading. Elbows up, I say!

points of view

Gold stars

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

"I DID it!" I yelped.

"Great, I'll put another gold star on the fridge," Jenn replied.

She was, of course, joking. We ran out of gold stars last week after I accidentally put my shoes on the right feet.

Yet there we were, confronted by another momentous achievement. That's right, I had put on my tee shirt correctly.

Many of you "gifted" people might not think this is such a big deal. But for some of us – the shirtfully challenged – putting a shirt on correctly is cause for celebration.

Unlike most people, I wake up every morning knowing that I have a 25 per cent chance of walking out of my bedroom with my shirt on correctly. It could just as easily be on inside out forward, inside out backwards, or just plain backwards.

Let that sink in.

On that glorious day, however, the shirt gods smiled upon me.

I'm not writing this to gain sympathy or even to start a foundation to help the shirtfully challenged. But I do think it is my responsibility to use this platform to spread awareness regarding this socially debilitating condition.

So here we go.

Look to the left of you. Look to the right of you. If your collar chafes, your shirt is probably on incorrectly.

I know. You're going to tell yourself, and everyone else, that you just "rushed to get dressed" or "dressed in the dark." That's fine. We all come to the realization in our own time.

But here are some signs that you might be shirtfully challenged.

You find yourself frequently doing up buttons behind your back.

People around you know your shirt size and the laundry instructions of all your tops.

Your work-related name tag is chafing your nipple.

People talk slowly to you the minute you take off your coat.

There are more.

The good news is there is nothing to be ashamed of. Dozens of people afflicted with this condition live perfectly normal lives – but only if they work from home or in jobs where shirts are optional.

Otherwise, people with this affliction do have a problem. But, rest assured, the issue is not theirs. It's a societal one. For instance, good luck getting a job as a runway model or brain surgeon.

Is this fair? No, it is not.

Just because you walk into the Post Office with your shirt on backwards and inside out doesn't mean people shouldn't take you seriously. OK, I will concede that twice in the same week is a bit much, but still.

All we are asking is that you treat us the same way you'd treat anyone else. The orientation of our shirts should not cause you nervousness. After all, this afflicts many people in the community that you know and respect – we are your friends, neighbours, spouses, and Leafs fans.

We live normal lives and do our best to put our shirts on correctly every single day.

As I noted, this morning was a good day for me – or what Jenn calls a one-in-four. I woke up and put on my favourite tee shirt like anyone else would, right-side out and front facing forward. It doesn't sound like a big deal to most of you. But to me it is a step in the right direction.

Or, it would be, if my shoes were on the right feet …

pic *of the* past

Mr. and Mrs. William Cooper were pioneers on the south shore of Boshkung Lake in the last half of the 1800s. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with their nine children in 1920. Front row from the left, Eveline Cooper Jones, Alma Cooper Redner, Mary Cooper Boice, Fanny Sims Cooper, William Cooper, George Cooper. Middle row from left, Samuel Redner, William Boice, Jane Bird Cooper, Lily Cooper Deacon, Jack Cooper, Ernest Cooper, William Cooper Jr., Amelia Boice Cooper. Back row from left, Lovella Sawyer Cooper, Annie Henderson Cooper, Alice Cooper Hewitt. Alfred Jones and James Deacon were absent. The last surviving member was Jane Bird Cooper who died in 1977 at the age of 90. /From the *Echo* archives

The digastric muscle

Tales from the great Green meadow

Lynda Shadbolt

I CLENCH MY jaw, like many people I know. For me, the clenching happens sometimes in my sleep, but also during the day. It's subtle enough that I don't always notice it right away, yet strong enough that my body feels the effects. This past Christmas week was especially challenging, and my jaw had plenty of reasons to tighten.

A few days before Christmas, my husband Jim and my mother Marie both came down with bad coughs. Suddenly, plans began to unravel. We had to cancel dinner parties, Christmas Day celebrations with friends, and a long-anticipated visit from my daughter's boyfriend. These things happen, of course, and most of us do our best to pivot and adjust when reality looks very different from what we imagined or planned for. Still, the disappointment lingered.

We were all together in a small space, germs everywhere, routines disrupted. I won't pretend we were happy all the time. There were moments of frustration and fatigue, and I noticed myself clenching my jaw again and again. I've come to realize that I often clench instead of speaking - holding things in rather than letting them out. Over time, that habit takes a toll.

Jaw clenching can create pain locally, but it doesn't stop there. When my jaw is tight, my hips begin to feel stiff, my breath shortens, and my whole body contracts. The tension ripples outward. This is where my long-standing yoga practice gently steps in - not as something I "should" do, but as something I return to when I need care myself.

Lately, I've been exploring face yoga, including exercises and self-massage to release the tension I hold in my jaw and face. During that Christmas week, I committed to taking 20 minutes each day. I closed my bedroom door and gave myself permission to pause. One simple practice I rely on is massaging the area just behind the earlobe, where the jaw meets the neck. This is where the digastric muscle lives, a small but important muscle involved in opening the jaw, chewing, swallowing, and even breathing. When it's tight - especially at night - it can interfere with sleep and overall ease.

I massage this area softly and slowly, breathing deeply as I go. I use a good cream and treat the time like a mini at-home spa. The physical relief is immediate, but the emotional shift is just as important. I feel calmer, quieter, more settled inside.

That daily 20-minute ritual didn't just help my body; it helped my heart. When I took care of myself first, I could return to caregiving with more patience, kindness, and even a sense of humor. And that kind of care - grounded and resourced - benefits everyone.

letters to the editor

Watch for AI when shopping online

To the Editor,

Re: Scam AI Ads Online

In addition to products such as toys, AI has also brought a significant increase in the number of fake clothing sale sites online. You can spot AI fakes when there is only one view of an item with no back or side view. Pinterest now has many fake "store closing soon" sites impersonating well known brands, advertising 75 per cent or more off, and with pictures from the original store's web site. If you order from these sites, you may receive nothing at all or a cheaply made copy of the real product. To spot these sites check the email address where the ad is from and then look online to compare to the stores actual sites.

The proliferation of cheap fast fashion has started a trend of thrift store buying to find better quality made clothing at discount prices. 1990s clothing is popular as it predates fast fashion. Online resale sites like my two favorites, THREDUP and Poshmark, are places to find decent quality brand name second hand clothing at lower prices.

When buying online clothing what you see may not be what you get.

Barb Schofield
Wilberforce

Minden makes it happen

To the Editor,

On behalf of the Minden Community Food Centre Board of Directors I would like to acknowledge a very successful 2025 Holiday Hamper Programme that saw the distribution of 214 hampers containing food for a holiday meal and toys for those families with children. This success could not be accomplished without the strong ongoing community support by area businesses and individuals. Thank you to the many volunteers who helped with the organization, setup and distribution of the hampers. Special thanks to Tim Hortons, Boshkung Brewing, Mulligans Pub & Patio and Burnt Crust Pizza for their generosity in supplying food and refreshments to the volunteers helping with this event.

Jim Wilson, Board Chair
Minden Community Food Centre

Letters to the Editor note: Submissions are subject to editing for newspaper style and punctuation.

Holiday magic

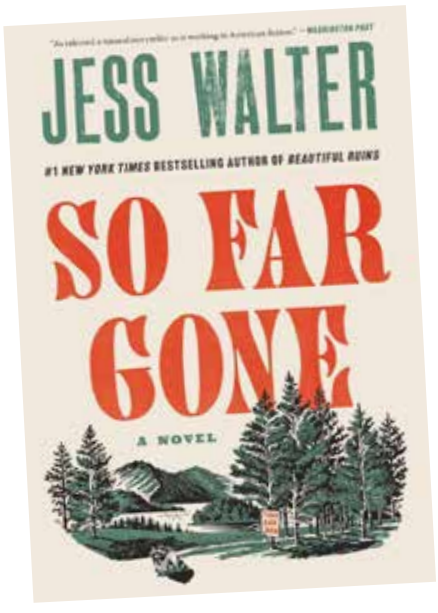
Volunteers gathered to assemble hundreds of holiday hampers at the Minden Community Food Centre. In total, over 200 hampers were given out to community members, helping to make a merry Christmas for many. /photos submitted by the Minden Community Food Centre

Minden Memories

A logging truck parked on Minden's main street. A White Rose gas station sign is visible in the photo. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week



A few weeks after the 2016 election, Rhys Kinnick snapped at Thanksgiving and punched his daughter's belligerent husband. Horrified by himself and the world, he ditched his phone and escaped to a remote Pacific Northwest cabin. Seven years later, his grandchildren arrive on his doorstep—frightened, nearly grown, and desperate for refuge after their mother's disappearance and their father's involvement with a Christian Nationalist militia. Rhys's off-grid cabin may be rough, but he's determined to keep them safe. When the militia kidnaps the kids, he's forced back into the world he abandoned. With a bipolar retired detective and his cutting ex-girlfriend, Rhys sets off on a chaotic, darkly comic rescue mission.

So Far Gone by Jess Walter is available at the Haliburton County Public Library as a book or Book Club Set.

Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Christmas is on us: a note from SIRCH

First, let's look at what had to happen behind the scenes to make this happen in reality …

1. A huge thank you to our benefactor, Steve Todd from Todd's Independent, who sponsored the Christmas meal.

2. Much appreciation to Wayne and Barb Fawcett, who donated a huge amount of potatoes.

3. Thank you, Della Redwood, for finding two musicians (Drew Allen and Karen Armstrong) to come and play. It made the dinner more of an experience for diners.

4. We couldn't have done this without Chef Guy Cassie and Anna Friesen, who cooked the meal. Guy deboned the turkeys so he could make "from scratch" gravy, which involved simmering the bones for about eight hours for the most delicious gravy. Everything was perfectly organized. And Guy did all the dishes.

5. Bistro cook, Denise Hinchcliffe, volunteered to help prep both the day before and for part of Christmas Day.

6. Decorated tables made the Bistro especially festive. A big thank you to Stacy McLean, who made all the beautiful centerpieces.

It's important to know that everyone donated their time to be at Christmas Is On Us.

Dinner was available on Christmas Day from noon to 6 p.m. There was no charge. Donations were appreciated but not expected.

People were waiting to get in at 11:30 a.m., and most guests came before 3 p.m. We served 85 meals. Double the number last year.

The volunteers, Trina West, Lindsay Ploogh, Crystal Alton, Pat McCann-Smith, Guy Armstrong, made the day by providing not just excellent service, but smiles, conversation, and laughter. I also volunteered for the day, serving as a greeter, server, table cleaner, floor sweeper, and whatever else was needed.

Musicians Drew Allen (first shift) and Karen Anderson (second shift) donated their time to really make it an occasion.

Dinner was a fresh salad from the tower greens, then turkey, stuffing, gravy, carrots, and corn, cranberry sauce made from scratch, and fresh buns made that day by Anna. Then trays of cookies, brownies, and cupcakes made by the SIRCH Bakery (thanks to Kristina, Sarah, and Judith). Everything was delicious.

The chefs at SIRCH preparing meals for Christmas dinner. /submitted

The atmosphere was awesome -- you could hear laughter and conversation over the music. Lots of comments in the guest book:

"Nice to be welcomed to a Family Dinner when we're alone at Christmas."

"Perfect. Awesome meal and dessert."

"Wow!"

"Lovely community spirit."

"Food was great. Company even better."

"Wonderful dinner, fabulous support staff."

Diners came alone, or with friends or family. We had very young children and teens. People made new friends, table-hopped, some left once they'd eaten, but many stayed to enjoy a second coffee and chat with the next table.

Although none of the volunteers or I asked, many diners spoke of how lonely they were, how they couldn't seem to break into the community, or how someone dear to them was no longer there. A couple of people were living rough, and one woman, driving from far away, talked about worrying about running out of gas, having no cooking facilities where she was. On her way out, she told everyone, especially fellow diners, how wonderful this experience was. She was overcome not just with the beautiful dinner but by the volunteers and other diners who were so friendly and welcoming.

And to her point, the diners made a huge difference. Everyone was happy. In fact, everyone left with a Thank you so much," saying how much they enjoyed the experience.

I'm sure there will be a fourth annual SIRCH Christmas in 2026.

Submitted

A snowy day at Boshkung Social in Minden. /submitted

Boshkung Brewing has replaced their food truck with a new kitchen trailer. The trailer has additional kitchen equipment such as a flat top grill and fryers. This addition has allowed Boshklung Brewing to expand their menu and increase their hours this winter. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

Boshkung reimagines business identity

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

Driving past Boshkung Brewing, perhaps you have noticed a change to the appearance of the food truck parked out front.

An iconic addition to the exterior of the brewery, the food truck has been swapped with a sleek black truck, replacing the former kitchen space.

With changes to their food offerings last year, owner Mathew Renda realized the need for improving his kitchen space.

"We couldn't keep up," said Renda, noting an increasing number of year-round visitors.

The newly installed food truck includes two fryers and a flat top grill. This new equipment has supported an expansion of their menu to include burgers, tacos, mussels, and fried chicken. Courtney Ryckman led the team developing the new menu, with Renda offering some thoughts throughout the journey. The new offerings provide a full dining experience for those wanting to share some appetizers, have a quick snack, or visit for an entire meal.

They have still kept the older food truck, which is still in a working condition. Renda says to keep your eyes peeled for it in the future.

Playing around with pickling, their menu now offers a taproom platter with pickled egg and vegetables made at the brewery. An offering that is one of Renda's go-to desires at a brewery, in addition to playing cribbage with his wife.

Their steady growth of their brewery operations, lead by brewmaster Ryan Prentice, combines with the new menu well to improve the experience of their customers.

The rate of people that drink alcohol is trending downward, notes Renda. Looking ahead to the future, Renda wanted to expand his business to a full dining experience. Even those without a palette for beer come to the brewery for their food. In addition to their beer offerings, cocktails and wine are available.

Noticing a lack of businesses that stay open late and shutter their doors in the winter, Renda decided to expand his hours of Boshkung Brewing to 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. from Tuesday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

"There aren't many options in Minden," said Renda.

Noting an increase in employee's time and cost of improving their kitchen space and dining area, Renda says that his investment is worth it towards his long term goal of becoming a distinguished restaurant in its own right in addition to brewing a variety of beers.

Renda says that the mindset he applies to his business is to stay busy and stay relevant.

In addition to expanding their hours, they will increase their offerings of events that happen at the brewery, such as trivia, karaoke, and both cribbage and euchre tournaments. Renda also noted the potential to collaborate with a winery to offer a wine pairing event.

"People want stuff to do," said Renda. "This was a much needed improvement."

There have also been improvements to their outdoor seating area. An enclosed heated space allows for more space for nightlife events and for customers to enjoy a meal and a drink. There is also the need for flexibility of the space as the patio is opened in the summer.

Renda opened Boshkung Brewery with the dream of making great beer and fostering community.

While he believes that his business is shifting its identity towards a restaurant with a brewery, he is committed to making the same great, innovative beers that Boshkung fans love.

Reflecting on 2025, Renda says that it was a good year, one of the best that Boshkung has ever had. Looking ahead, growth is the number one priority for his business.

To grow, he hopes that Boshkung continues to be a pinnacle of the community.

"The community is our bread and butter," said Renda. "I am proud to be the employer of so many employees."

With growth, expansion is needed. Even expansion of their team, says Renda. Looking to the summer, he says that they will be making moves to hire their summer staff soon.

Keep an eye for updates from Boshkung Brewing on their social media pages for their latest events, hiring notices, and special offers.

Cell towers affect on real estate

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

With cell towers entering discussions frequently throughout the year, there is always mention of the impact that cell towers have on real estate.

Cell towers are regulated by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). Public consultation is part of the process of building a cellular tower across Canada. With this public consultation, the public voices reasons as to why the local council should not provide a letter of concurrence, approving of the build of a new tower.

The impact of cell towers affecting the price of real estate cannot be considered as a reason to vote non-concurrence.

Environmental concerns, inadequate public consultation, and poor site selection are the most common and valid reasons for votes of non-concurrence in Ontario.

What is the impact of cell towers on the real estate market in Haliburton County?

Similar to the rest of Ontario, the values of houses have slightly declined, says local real estate agent Chris James.

> ***"The market is consumer confidence."***
>
> — Linda Baumgartner, real estate agent

"More inventory has come on the market with buyers being more selective in their choices," said James. "Waterfront properties are still the catalyst for the local market but the non-waterfront market has been more robust."

Both James and fellow realtor Linda Baumgartner say that cell towers in Haliburton County have not affected housing prices.

In fact, it seems to be the opposite. Both real estate agents reported that cell towers have not been a concern of buyers in the County.

With local buyers, more concerns arise from the connectability and access to cell service. Buyers are wanting to be able to use the internet and be able to get connected in the event of an emergency.

Baumgartner says that one of the first questions she receives from her clients is what cell service is like at the property.

The current real estate market is a buyer's market. Baumgartner offers that first time home owners are recommended to go to their bank for a prequalification of mortgage and discuss what price of home they can afford.

"The market is consumer confidence," said Baumgartner.

Some of the reasons for the slight decline in property values could be changing tastes and people wanting to return to larger cities after the COVID-19 pandemic. After people had purchased new homes during the pandemic, some are forced to refinance.

Hike Haliburton™ Winter Edition

HIKE HALIBURTON • WINTER EDITION

FEBRUARY 7-8, 2026

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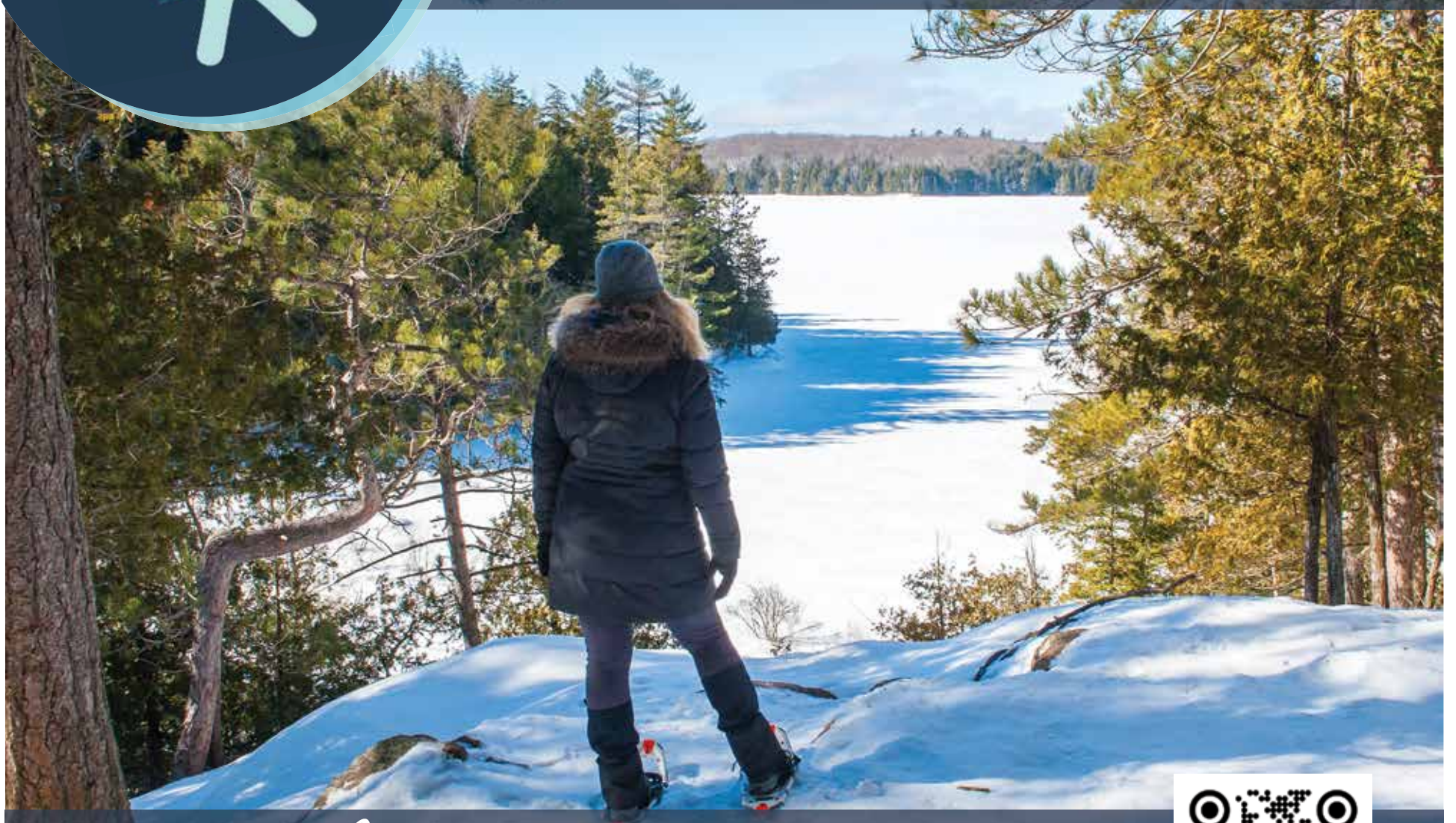

MY Haliburton HIGHLANDS

REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 7TH →

www.hikehaliburton.com

Derby aims to draw visitors to region

Rick Mercer leads a team of dogs during a past Haliburton Highlands Dogsled Derby at the Pinestone. /FILE

from page 1

powerful team of dogs. "The public is more than welcome to watch," said McCready, sharing that in the past, buses of photographers and visitors have joined in on the fun. "It's amazing how many people come from outside the county, and it's totally free for spectators."

With limited professional races available in the province, the Haliburton Highlands Dogsled Derby draws hundreds of teams to the site. With this in mind, for the first year ever, McCready is looking at implementing an online registration system, to ease the process for participants.

More information will be shared as the event draws closer. But for now, McCready and her team are ready to bring back the longstanding Haliburton Highlands tradition. "Here we are," she chuckled. "We're coming back, and we're so excited."

A young musher takes off at the races. /submitted

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
PROPOSED ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT
TO ZONING BY-LAW 2005-120 OF
THE MUNICIPALITY OF DYSART ET AL

- **DATE:** **Tuesday, January 27, 2026**
- **TIME:** **9:05 AM**
- **LOCATION:** **Take notice that the public meeting for zoning by-law amendment will take place in Council Chambers in the Municipal Office 135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario and in electronic format using Zoom. The meeting will be live streamed to YouTube.**

Applications:

Lands of Miller's Lake Conservation - File No. D14-ZB-2025-009

Purpose and Effect: The zoning amendment is a condition of a concurrent severance application (H-033-25 & H034-25), the proposed amendment would rezone the subject lots from Rural Type 1L (RU1L) Zone to Waterfront Residential Type 3L (WR3L) Zone, Open Space (OS) Zone and Environmental Protection (EP) Zone for their intended uses.

Location: Civic Address – Unassigned, legally described as Part Lots 31 to 34, Concession 8, Parts 1, 2, 7, 9, 17 and 18, Plan 19R-7172, in the Geographic Township of Guilford, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

Lands of Stewart – File No. D14-ZB-2025-011

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment would rezone the subject property from Waterfront Residential Type 4 (WR4) zone and Open Space – 1 (OS-1) exception zone to Waterfront Residential Type 4 (WR4) zone and Open Space – XX (OS-XX) exception zone in order to permit the existing accessory structures within the area of the property currently zoned as Open Space.

Location: Civic Address – 3023 Trapper's Trail Road, legally described as Part Lots 17 and 18, Concession 4, Lot 27, Plan 636, Part 2, Plan 19R-6824 in the Geographic Township of Dudley, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

Lands of Madlo Enterprises Inc. – File No. D14-ZB-2025-014

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment would rezone the subject property from the Waterfront Residential Type 5L-3 (WR5L-3) Zone to a Waterfront Residential Type 5L-XX (H-WR5L-XX) Exception Zone with Holding Provision to permit a reduced minimum water setback of 30.0 metres from Drag Lake, instead of the current site-specific minimum setback of 45.0 metres and to include Site Plan Control prior to development.

Location: Civic Address – Unassigned, legally described as Part Lot 1, Concession 6, Lot 3, Plan 19M16, in the Geographic Township of Dysart, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

For more information about electronic meetings and public participation in an electronic meeting, contact the Planning Technician at twilson@dysartetal.ca,. .

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS MATTER INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT APPEAL RIGHTS: Contact the Planning and Land Information Department by appointment during regular office hours (8:30 A.M-4:30 P.M, Monday to Friday), or by contacting Kris Orsan, Manager of Planning at korsan@dysartetal.ca.

Dated at the Township of Dysart, this 6th day of January 2026.

Kris Orsan, CPT,
Manager of Planning
Planning and Land Information
Municipality of Dysart et al
135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0
Phone: 705-457-1740 ext. 626
E-mail: korsan@dysartetal.ca

Poppy Campaign success

At this time, I would like to say thank you to the many volunteers that participated in our Poppy Campaign this year. Without your dedication to our veterans and their families. The Legion would not be able to support all those who met the challenges of service so we can live free in our great country. Haliburton is a community of giving and it shines best on Remembrance Day. This community is strong and unwavering in their support for our veterans and the Poppy Campaign. I can say without hesitation you should be proud of what you have accomplished. I would also like to send a thank you to my Co-chair Adrienne Clark and Margaret Cox (finances) for their immense help keeping everything on track. Without the two of you the campaign would not have been as smooth as it was. Below is our year end and our campaign has been a great success again thanks to the businesses that stepped up to support us and the community as well. So, I would like to say Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the best community any person could ask for. Until next November stay safe and enjoy 2026.

The Royal Canadian Legion, Haliburton Branch 129 Poppy Trust Fund Branch Status Report Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2025

Balance in Branch Poppy Trust Funds as of Jan. 1, 2025 - $ 51,611.59
Income from Campaign and all other Sources- $22,633.20
Sub Total - $74,244.79
Campaign Expenses and Youth Education Program - $7,580.11
Donations from Fund - $20,943.70
Total Expenses and Donations $ 28,523.81
Closing Balance as of Dec. 31, 2025 $ 42,944.98

Submitted

Singer-songwriter Terra Lightfoot signs an album at Redmans Records./ADAM FRISK staff

Terra Lightfoot performs at Redmans Records

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

Juno Award-nominated singer-songwriter Terra Lightfoot stopped by Redmans Records late last month to promote her latest album and perform a couple of her songs.

The seasoned rocker swung by the record shop in downtown Haliburton on Dec. 20 to sign copies of her latest album, *Home Front*, and perform a two-song acoustic set.

Lightfoot was greeted by a dozen or so people before the singer took to signing some of her albums and singing a couple of songs.

The Haliburton Highlands plays a special role in Lightfoot's latest album, *Home Front*, which was released in October of last year.

"*Home Front* was recorded in the living room, on the back porch, in the relaxing moments after dinner or the late evening, when the crickets and peepers were singing their loudest," the singer said in a statement on her website. "I find myself living more comfortably in my own bones than ever before when I'm here. There is a deep quiet here, in the house that backs onto the beaver marsh. Blue herons fly, and moose and bears walk the forest path out back. It is a place where I can't help but be more connected to the natural world."

You can catch Lightfoot next month, when she plays the Haliburton Legion on Feb. 13 at 7 p.m.

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Ontario

January 2025 Year in Review

Pictured, Erik Treble, Mathew Renda, and Ryan Prentice at the Ontario Brewing Awards. /FILE

The Clement family made the trek in to the newly opened A&W on Hops Drive in Haliburton. The fast food chain hosted a soft launch opening on Saturday, Jan. 18, and was met with a wealth of community support. /FILE

Brandon and Ilona Sutcliffe with their three daughters, Ava, Ildiko, and Milania. The twins were born the morning of Jan. 1 at their home in Wilberforce. /FILE

Twins arrive on New Year's Day

It was a New Year's Day unlike any other for Ilona and Brandon Sutcliffe, when the Wilberforce-based couple welcomed not only their second child, but their third as well.

"Twins don't run in the family," said Brandon, "so this was a surprise for everyone."

At 36.5 weeks pregnant, Ilona delivered fraternal twin girls on the morning of Jan. 1, at their cozy home in Highlands East. Ildico was born first, with Milania following suit two hours later. Both girls weighed in at just over five pounds after a fast labour on the first day of the year.

Let's Get Local takes a hit

"Who would want to do this?"

A fair question from Mary Douglas, the owner of Minden's Let's Get Local on Bobcaygeon Road, after her front window was vandalized on the early morning of Dec. 29.

"One of my staff got to work, and called me and said I better come in," Douglas recalled. "I thought the glass had maybe just cracked from the cold, but then I saw that someone had broken the window."

Trudeau resigns as Liberal Party leader

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has heeded party pressure and will throw in the towel.

Canada's prime minister for about the last decade decided to resign the Liberal party's leadership and vacated the position when Mark Carney was chosen as the new representative.

Trudeau made the announcement Jan. 6 in Ottawa.

New doctor starts with family Health Team

It's not every day a new doctor comes to town. Actually, it's fairly rare.

The province-wide doctor shortage is a problem that is not isolated to our neck of the woods. But staff at both the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team as well as the County of Haliburton have been working diligently to attract new physicians to service the ever-growing roster of patients. But their efforts have been rewarded. Starting March 1, 2025, Dr. Sharysse Kayoumedjian joined the roster of physicians in Haliburton County. Kayoumedjian originally hails from Thornhill, and brings a wide variety of knowledge to the table. "She's very focused on clinics and women's health," said Robinson, "she's got some very unique experiences."

A&W opens its doors in Haliburton

The long-discussed A&W Restaurant opened its doors at 10 Hops Drive in Haliburton. With rumours circulating around town leading up to the opening, the manager of the facility, Sohail Khoja, was thrilled to officially welcome guests in on Saturday, Jan. 18.

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February 2025 Year in Review

Mammography machine lands in Haliburton

"This is such a historical moment for our community," said Lauren Ernst, the communications and employee experience lead for Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS), in reference to the long-awaited arrival of a mammography machine at the Haliburton Hospital site. On Feb. 3, HHHS welcomed the delivery of the machine on-site. Through snowy weather, Melanie Klodt Wong, the HHHSF Executive Director and David Blodgett, HHHSF Board Chair joined Nelson in taking the heavy machinery off the truck, and delivering it into the Haliburton Hospital site. "We are so excited to have this state of the art equipment here in Haliburton," said Nelson. "We are one of the first hospitals in Ontario that has this type of mammography equipment."

Left candidates largely aligned; PCs a no-show at meeting

The blustery storm that hit Haliburton County over the weekend resulted in a last-minute decision to host a Zoom meeting for the progressive candidates representing Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, and Brock townships on Feb. 16.

The meeting - presented by the grassroots Save the Minden ER group - was originally slated for the Minden Community Centre, but a declaration of significant weather put out by the township forced the meeting online. Despite the shuffle, the event was attended by over 50 interested viewers, who took the time to watch candidates.

Barbara Doyle for the NDP, Alison Bennie for the Liberals, and Tom Regina for the Green Party were present. It was noted that Conservative candidate Laurie Scott was invited to the discussion, but declined attendance.

Russell Red Records becomes Redmans Records

In 2019, Colin Burke and Dan Manley opened Russell Red Records. Manley and Burke noticed the decline in business in 2023. Optimistic for 2024, the revenue for the store never bounced back. With the recent tariffs threatened by the United States, Manley's concerns regarding the future of the record industry in Canada have risen. By 2024, Kelsey Redman came on as the manager for a store, and early in 2025, took over the business on the main street in Haliburton, changing the name and adding her own spin on the local shop.

Red Hawk Skiers Fly at COSSA Championships

The Red Hawk Nordic Ski team raced on the trails of Arrowhead Provincial Park for COSSA competition on Wednesday February 12, braving some very brisk morning temperatures. The meet combined skiers from the COSSA, GBSSA and CISSA Association Championships as skiers aimed to qualify for the OFSAA Nordic Championships following week in Sudbury.

The annual Dorset Snowball winter carnival had peak wintery conditions. /FILE

Above, Raine Nadeau fistbumps a young fan at the S. G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena. /FILE

Right, Terra Lightfoot performs at the Haliburton Legion. /FILE

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March 2025 Year in Review

Juna opens it's doors

Fine foodies unite to welcome Haliburton's newest eatery: Juna Restaurant, officially open on March 7. The Italian restaurant, located at 210 Highland Street in the heart of Haliburton, was originally slated for a December opening. But a series of challenges arose for owners Terri Mathews-Carl and Christoph Carl when it came to moving ahead. "We had a lot of difficulty and hardships when it came to attaining permits from the township," Terri said. The restaurant opening was met with roaring success, even with the off-season open date.

Buy Canadian; how the tariffs hit our home

As of March 4, 2025, the pending tariff threats from U.S. President Donald Trump have been put into place. Following a 30-day reprieve, the blanket tariffs on Canada and Mexico include 25 per cent on all imports, with the exception of 10 per cent on Canadian energy. The Canadian government responded with 25 per cent tariffs on $30 billion of U.S. goods, with the intention of increasing this number in the not-so-distant future.

"It's going to take a little time to get everything right," said Steve Todd, the owner of Todd's Independent, a franchise of Loblaws Grocery Store chains. "It's only been a few days, and it's going to be a learning curve for everyone."

Highlands East volunteers recognized

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities, and MP Jamie Schmale had a busy few weeks traveling across the region to celebrate them.

Schmale's the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, which has a population of 122,401, received over 100 applications for the King Charles III Coronation Medal. The award is designed to acknowledge and celebrate individuals who have made an impactful difference to a particular province, territory, region, or community in Canada. Out of the many applications, Schmale and his team were able to identify 30 across the riding who really stood out.

In Highlands East, two residents were celebrated at the Wilberforce Legion on March 4 with the medals: Ken Mott and Brenda Boomhouer.

Highlands Corridor residents make their voices heard

Nearly 200 individuals came out to the Haliburton Legion at the end of March to partake in an open house hosted by Citizens for Crown Land Protection (CCLP). The organization was formed in light of a dispute that was brought forward in February of this past year.

At the time, a private local Facebook user, Amy Davidson, shared in a post that has since gone viral, surrounding questions aimed at the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust (HHLT).

The concern was rooted in the access to Crown land from the Land Trust along the Highlands Corridor. "The Highlands Corridor offers a nature-based solution to building climate change resilience, protecting lands and waters, and maintaining biodiversity," says the Land Trust website.

Flood concerns on the rise in Minden

"Mother Nature is in charge," said Mayor Bob Carter, in reference to Minden holding their breath as flood season approaches.

The township has had major floods occur in the recent years of 2013, 2017, and 2019, with a smattering of flood watches and warnings filling the years between.

Positioned along the Gull River, the spring run-off presents the risk of high water levels every time winter melts away, but this year, with accumulating snow levels, locals are feeling on-edge. The current snow depth across the county ranges between 50 to 80 centimeters, and Carter noted that if there are a series of warm days back-to-back, that could be dangerous.

Minden Skating Club celebrates 75 years

Minden has a rich and vibrant history when it comes to local sports, and over the years, one of the most pronounced activities in the region has been skating.

That's why, when it came to the attention of Jane Symons, the head coach for the Minden Skating Club, that the organization would be celebrating 75 years of successes in the community, she knew it was time to "go big." "I was totally caught off guard when a grandparent asked me 'what is the Minden Club doing to celebrate its 75th birthday?'" Symons said. "I hadn't even paid attention … how did I miss that? And wow, I've been here for over half of that time."

Visitors celebrate St. Patrick's Day at Boshkung in Minden. /FILE

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Highlands Summer Festival seeks 2026 cast

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

A new year is a time to challenge yourself, to step outside your comfort zone, and to explore the possibilities of your talents.

What better time to dive into the world of local theatre. "It's a big season this year," said Highlands Summer Festival artistic producer Douglas Walker, "so there are a lot of roles we are looking to fill this year."

The local theatre lineup includes *Anne of Green Gables - the Musical, Doris and Ivy in the Home,* and *Too Many Cooks*. The established theatre company is heading into their 26th season, and historically captures a mixture of local performers and some from away. "Anyone and everyone is welcome," said Walker. "You don't need to have experience. Just a positive 'go get-em' outlook. A willingness to jump in and play."

Melissa Stephens, the executive producer of the festival, echoed Walker's comments. "Some of our best surprises are people who have not ever been on the stage before," she said, "or people who did it as teenagers and now have time to renew their passion for theatre."

With the stacked lineup, the producers are seeking a wide variety of participants in all age groups. In *Anne of Green Gables* alone, the casting requires a number of children, seniors, and everyone in between.

> ***"Some of our best surprises are people who have not ever been on the stage before ..."***
>
> — Melissa Stephens, HSF executive producer

Walker and Stephens have prepared a detailed auditions package that is available online, via www.highlandssummerfestival.on.ca. While the full list of sought-after roles is listed through the package, Walker noted that they will be seeking others, as well. "We'll also be looking for an amazing ensemble to bring the energy for our musical," he shared.

The process to audition can be accessible for everyone. "It depends on what they are interested in auditioning for," said Walker. "If they'd like to be considered for the musical, we'll need to hear them sing and do a monologue or scene for us. If they are interested in auditioning for our plays only a monologue or scene will be required."

Walker suggested that while preparation will allow the producers to see what the actors are capable of, everyone is welcome to audition. "They can prepare a monologue or scene, a song if they'd like to be in the musical," he said. "But mostly I would just like people to be themselves and bring their personality to the audition. Also a willingness to jump in and go for it."

Auditions will be held for all three shows will be held on Saturday, Jan. 31, and Sunday, Feb. 1 at Haliburton United Church, located at 10 George Street. To arrange for an audition, contact Highlands Summer Festival board member Sylvia Perkins at sylvia.perkins55@gmail.com. Information about all auditions can be found via the Highlands Summer Festival website. If folks are unable to attend the in-person auditions, a video clip can be submitted.

Walker encourages all to come out to check out the process. "Come audition," he laughed. "Even if you've no idea what to expect. Theatre is awesome."

Community Coffee House returns for 2026

The first session of the Haliburton Community Coffee House for 2026 will take place on Monday, Jan. 12, at 7 pm in the Schofield Room of the Haliburton Legion, 719 Mountain St., Haliburton. Offering live music and presentations to inform and inspire, these Coffee Houses provide a space for discussions about how we can make our communities better places.

The Jan. 12 session will feature live music by Gord Kidd, one of Haliburton's best-known musicians. Gord will be followed by a discussion focused on the support of adults with developmental and physical challenges, chaired by the host of "Hali Cares with Pat", a bi-weekly radio show on Tuesday mornings on Moose FM. Pat, mother of a daughter with severe developmental needs and advocate for those with developmental and physical needs and their parents and caregivers, will be joined by Tanya Yakeley, Lead Coordinator for Respite Now, who will speak about how to find support workers, and Darren Holding, Director of Purple House Care services, which can provide overnight or short term respite to caregivers and enjoyable experiences to those in their care, along with Sam Tate from the Passport Funding program of Canopy Services, a reimbursement program for community engagement and participation to support individuals to live more independently and provide respite for caregivers.

Mark your calendars for future Coffee Houses, which include:

Monday, Feb. 9 - Music by George and Steve Porter; presentation by Peter Smith on the chemistry of happiness

Monday, March 9 - Music by Peter Smith; presentation by Rich Anton on the journey of addiction and 'Coming Full Circle.'

Monday, April 13 - Music by Jeff Moulton; presentation by Fay Martin on living with a spouse with dementia

Monday, May 11 - Presentation by Dr. Norm Bottum on Maintaining Body and Mind as We Age; musician to be confirmed

Monday, June 8 - Presentation by Xavier Massé on the arts and the spirit; musician to be confirmed

These sessions are open to all, with no admission charge, and light refreshments are provided. They are sponsored by the Baha'is of Haliburton County.

For further information, please call 416-606-9657.

Submitted

EH talks plants

The topic of the first EH! Virtual presentation of 2026 is "Ecological Foundations: Understanding the roles of grasses, rushes and sedges". Basil Conlin of Haliburton Micromeadows will be our featured speaker. Baz is incredibly knowledgeable about native plants and their function in the ecosystem.

Conlin's talk will centre around creating a connection with and an understanding of the plants that are the foundation of our ecosystems. One of the most important foundation plants are the grasses and sedges, which are also the least appreciated or understood. He will introduce sedges (and some grasses) to the audience and teach them how to identify locally native species, keep them on the land, and use them as allies in restoration, erosion control, garden design, and septic plantings.

To register in advance for this presentation, please visit environmenthaliburton.org.

Submitted

Telling our Stories

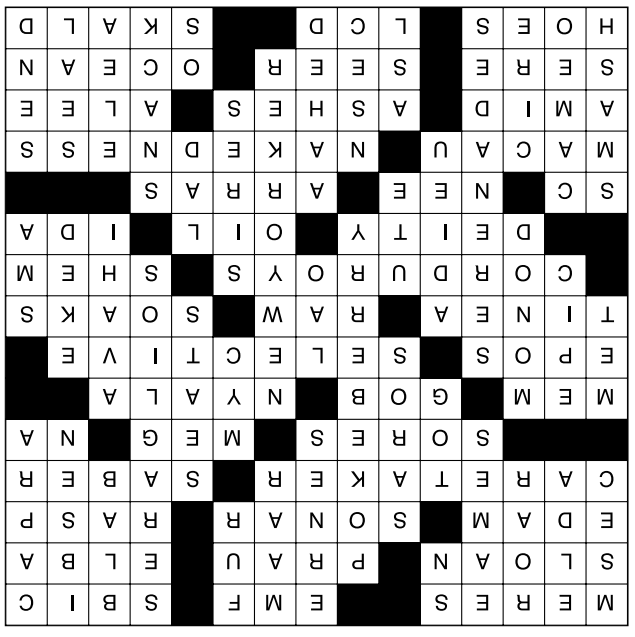
The "Telling Our Stories" Speakers Series is pleased to host local historian and colourful character, Russ Wunker, on Wednesday Jan. 14. Mr. Wunker will take us on a journey back in time to discover the history and early days of tourism at Miners' Bay. As a gateway to Haliburton County, this area helped shape our tourism industry. Vintage postcards and photographs will help to tell the tale.

While Russ has spent the majority of the past three quarters of a century at Miners' Bay, he has not been without other pursuits. His resume offers a profile of a well-travelled, eclectic career that includes *College Professor*, a variety of high-profile Federal Government positions, travel guide and consultant. In his spare time, Mr. Wunker also assisted in the development of three museums, as well as local historical and architectural preservation projects.

The Speakers Series, a member of the Haliburton County Community Cooperative, takes place on the second Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Haliburton Highlands Outdoor Association Fish Hatchery, 6712 Gelert Road. Admission is $15 per person. Pre-registration is highly recommended. To obtain tickets, contact Barrie Martin at 705-457-7557 or by email at barrieinthehighlands@gmail.com.

Submitted

CROSSWORD ANSWERS



SUDOKU SOLUTION

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5	9	4	7	6	2	3	8	1
8	7	3	9	1	4	5	6	2
6	2	8	5	9	3	1	4	7
4	3	1	2	7	6	8	5	9
7	5	9	1	4	8	2	3	6
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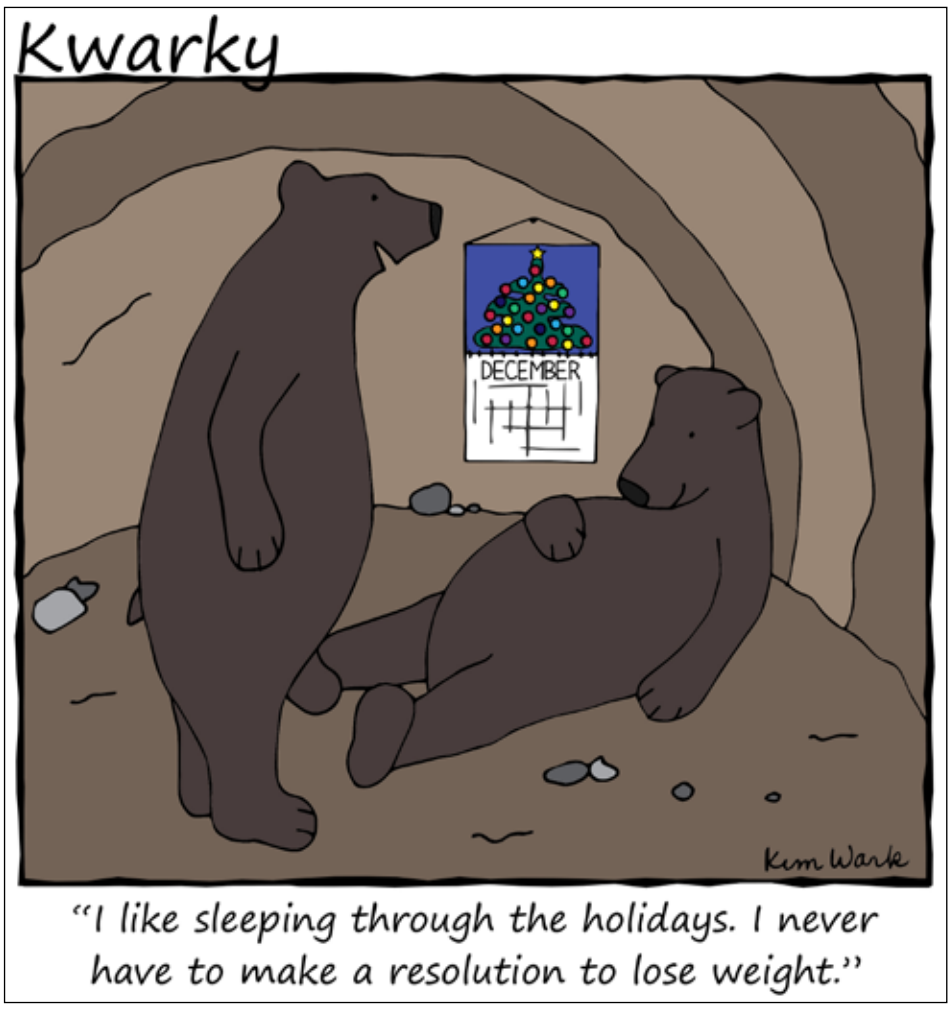

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		6						4
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7	5		1		8	2		
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		7	6		1			8

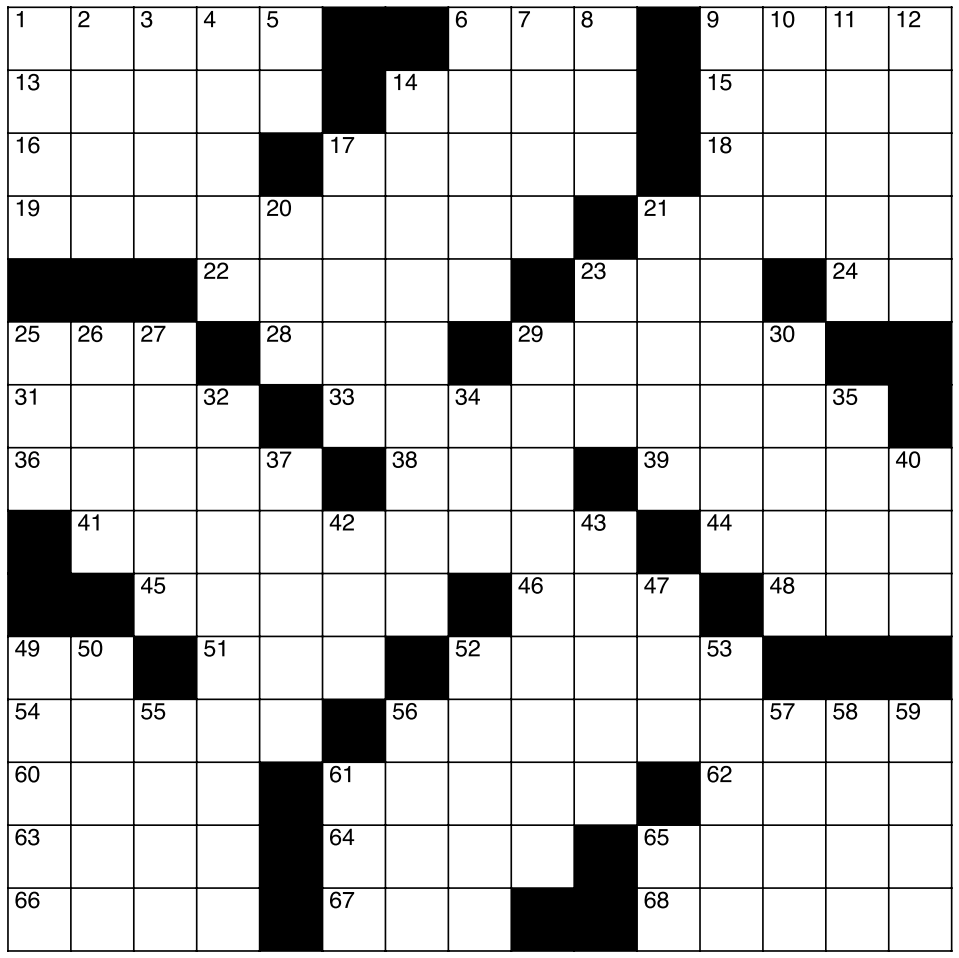
Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 17



CLUES ACROSS
1. Lakes
6. Electromotive force
9. Invests in little enterprises
13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
14. Small sailboat
15. Actor Idris
16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
17. System that detects objects under water
18. Harsh, grating noise
19. Steward
21. A fencing sword
22. Infections
23. Actress Ryan
24. Sodium
25. Swedish castle
28. A lump of slime
29. African antelope
31. Insurance providers
33. Choosy
36. Ringworm
38. Unpolished
39. Drenches
41. Pant style
44. Son of Noah
45. Spiritual being
46. Upton Sinclair novel
48. Journalist Tarbell
49. Popular sports highlight show
51. Born of
52. Rich tapestry
54. S. China seaport
56. State of being unclothed
60. Surrounded by
61. Residue
62. Away from wind
63. Dried-up
64. Visionary
65. A very large body of water
66. Garden tools
67. Screen type
68. Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN
1. Millisecond
2. Spanish city
3. A sudden very loud sound
4. ÒThe Indiana Jones of beerÓ
5. Tin
6. Sea eagles
7. Volcanic crater
8. Type of coat
9. WomenÕs apartments in Ottoman palace
10. Divulge a secret
11. Norwegian playwright
12. ÒItÕs a Wonderful LifeÓ director
14. Poisonous perennial plant
17. 18-year astronomical period
20. Clothes
21. Places to sit
23. Family of regulator genes
25. New York ballplayer
26. Impressive in size or scope
27. Jacques __, French biologist
29. One from the Big Apple
30. Genus of woolly lemurs
32. Songs to oneÕs beloved
34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
35. Supplemented with difficulty
37. Farewell
40. Investment account (abbr.)
42. One from Utah
43. Begets
47. A male child
49. Break apart
50. Brief appearance
52. Partner to ÒoohedÓ
53. A light informal meal
55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
56. One billionth of a second
57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
58. Close tightly
59. Mail out
61. Language
65. Computer characteristic

Answers on page 17

Huskies Hockey

In a nail-biter of a game on Jan. 4, the Huskies toppled the Newmarket Hurricanes with a score of 5-4. The next home game is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 17 against the Aurora Tigers. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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Meeting Space for Rent: Blue Sky Studio at Haliburton Chiropractic. Bright open space downtown with private entrance and washroom. Available for rent by the hour, half or full day. Contact: **705-457-3500** info@haliburtonchiropractic.com

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One (1) Permanent
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Reporting to the Deputy Director of Public Works, this position has primary responsibility for traffic analysis and road signage.

Preferred candidates will have post-secondary education in civil engineering or land development and 2 years of experience in road construction and maintenance, preferably in a municipal environment. Must have a valid G driver's licence. The hourly rate for this unionized CUPE position is $36.08.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than January 16, 2026.

We thank all who apply for this position; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

Employment Opportunity
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Public Works Equipment Operator (permanent, full-time)

Reporting to the Operation Manager the successful applicants primary duties include, but not limited to operations of a sidewalk plow, dump truck (with sander/snowplow), backhoe, loader and grader. Self-motivated applicants must be able to work outdoors in all weather with minimal supervision. A valid Ontario 'A' or 'D' licence (manual) with 'Z' endorsement is required along with an acceptable abstract. Pursuant to CUPE Local #2142 the rate of pay is $29.89 per hour based on a 40-hour work week. Pension and Benefits after a 6-month probationary period.

Upon final selection, the applicant will be required to provide, at their own expense, a Criminal Record and Judicial Matters check from the Ontario Provincial Police or appropriate police force. The detailed job description is available on our website www.dysartetal.ca/careers
Interested individuals are invited to email a detailed resume and cover letter to:

Sonja Marx, HR Manager, hr@dysartetal.ca. **No Later Than 4 pm Friday January 9th, 2026.**

** We thank all who apply; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodations for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. *The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes.* **

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Digital Transformation Specialist
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Due to an upcoming maternity leave, the Municipality of Dysart et al is seeking an energetic individual to join our team in the role of Digital Transformation Specialist. Salary range is $80,464 - $94,131 commensurate with skills and experience.
A detailed job description is available at dysartetal.ca/careers for your review.

Interested applicants may submit their resume and cover letter to Sonja Marx at hr@dysartetal.ca, and indicate **Digital Transformation Specialist** as the subject.

Applications must be submitted via email and may be accepted until 4:00 pm on Friday, January 9, 2026, with an anticipated start date of February 2, 2026.

We thank all of those who apply, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodations for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes.

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

David Michael Stevens

Passed away peacefully at the Extendicare, Haliburton on Wednesday, December 24, 2025, at the age of 84.

Beloved husband of Sonia and loving father of Stefanie. Dear brother of Connie Graham (Don), uncle to Michael Graham and Geoffrey Graham. Son of the late Andy and Ada Stevens.

Dave was the owner of the Beaverbrook Golf Course in Minden for many years.

A Visitation, Masonic Service and a Service to Celebrate Dave's Life will take place in the spring of 2026. Cremation has taken place.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

In Loving Memory of

Bob James

August 18, 1947 - Dec 29, 2025

Born in Bowmanville, Ontario to John and Dorothy James, passed peacefully in Haliburton at the age of 78, with family in his home of 50 years.

Bob is survived by his 3 sons, Sam, Mason, Ben, Daughter in law Marcedes and Grand-daughter Storii, his brother Rick, in laws, nieces, nephews, and many friends.

Bob had come to Haliburton in 1972 pursuing careers as a teacher, a builder, and a purposeful life among nature.

Bob was a proud father, gifted golfer and billiards player, uniquely intelligent and funny, prioritized fitness into his old age, and loved to party.

He tended to his property, the wildlife, and helped his children navigate their lives and careers.

An outdoor service will be held with close friends and family at his home in the spring to celebrate his life and story"

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

OBITUARIES

Stanley "Stan" Watt

Resident of Haliburton

With deep love and gratitude for a life well lived, the family of Stan announces his peaceful passing into the presence of the Lord on Saturday Dec 27, 2025, at the age of 87, surrounded by loved ones. Beloved Husband of Phyllis Watt (nee Bowron).

Born on March 9, 1938, in the County of Haliburton, Stan was the eldest son of 5 children of Phurness Watt and Marjorie Parish Watt. He began his early years in Victoria Street School in Haliburton. After this, he worked in the family grocery store, then at the lumber mill in Wilberforce before becoming an employee of the GM Boys Club at 18yrs old. There, his faith and values were shaped and deepened after his commitment to Jesus at the Salvation Army. As a devoted follower of Christ, Stan lived out his faith daily through his kindness, generosity, and prayerful spirit.

He served others with humility and grace, reflecting God's love in conversation and in powerful ways. Stan found joy in teasing the neighborhood children while fixing bikes, volunteering and helping others, time with family, enjoying the outdoors, and cherished the blessings of faith, family, and community.

He is lovingly remembered by his children: Rob (Catherine), Chris (Peggy), Teresa (Karl), grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. His legacy of faith, love, and compassion will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.

Visitation & Funeral Service

Community Funeral Home
www.communityfuneralhomes.com

Friends and family are invited to call on Tuesday Morning, January 6, 2026, at 12:00 (Noon) at the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy #118 Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209 for a Service in Stan's memory (Visitation 2 hours prior.) As an expression of sympathy donations in Stan's memory can be made to the Haliburton 4Cs Foodbank.

In Loving Memory of

John "Dutchie" Colwell

With deep sadness, we announce the sudden passing of Dutchie, in his 71st year, at Lakeridge Health Oshawa, surrounded by his loving immediate family, after a short, intense battle with Lymphoma Blood Cancer and an unknown weakened heart condition.

Dutchie will be deeply missed by his wife, Mary (nee Cascagnette). Loved father to Clayton (Marielle) and Kristine (Gabriel). Grandpa to Hailey and Hunter. Predeceased by both parents, Robert & Anne, and parents-in-law Lawrence & Charlotte.

Dutchie leaves behind brother David (Jacqueline), sisters-in-law Rosemary (the late Larry), Joan (Greg), and brothers-in-law Brian (Jane), and Paul.

Uncle to Melissa (Tyler), Travis, Gary (Christy), Nicholas (Brittney), Paul (Katherine), Joshua, Danielle (Josh), Courtney, and Brittney (Kyle). Great-Uncle to Zachary, Jayden, Izabella, Calvin, Emery, Tucker, and Tristan.

Dutchie was born in Herefordshire, England, on November 19, 1954. He moved to Canada in 1957 and settled in Bowmanville in 1963.

Whether fishing quiet lakes, walking the Haliburton Forest trails, riding snowmobiles or side by sides, hunting with patience and respect, watching the sun rise and set, or simply sitting by a campfire sharing stories, Dutchie felt most at home in the "natural" world.

Many have learnt from him how to bait a hook, read the weather, and track a trail of footprints. But his most proudest accomplishments were being a loving husband of over 41 years, an amazing dad for 37 years, and an adoring Grandpa for 7 years. His smile and happy whistling will be missed and always remembered by many family, friends, and pets.

Special thank you to all of our family and friends, Bowmanville Legion Branch 178, and the wonderful team at Lakeridge Health Oshawa, who provided great support over the last few months.

Visitation will be held on Friday, January 16, 2026, at Northcutt Elliott Funeral Home, 53 Division Street, Bowmanville, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2026, from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Bowmanville Legion Branch 178, 109 King Street, Bowmanville.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre in Oshawa and/or to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. You are also welcome to plant a tree in memory of Dutchie's love of nature. To send flowers to the family or plant a tree in memory of John, please visit our floral store.

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Budget boost for HHHS

Santa stopped by the Haliburton Highlands Health Services just before Christmas and helped ease pressure on the organization's budget. Announcements from the Ministry of Health helped make it a brighter holiday season in three areas.

The provincial government has announced that $162,670 will be added to the health services board's $2,611,000 annual base budget. (HHHS also draws revenue of $736,000 from other sources for a total operating budget this year of $3,348,000.) The infusion of money was part of a province-wide announcement made December 23 which will see $196 million distributed to hospitals throughout the province.

While HHHS has been able to operate close to a balanced budget during this year, several members of the board have noted that HHHS has been underfunded. The Health Services Restructuring Commission report, issued last year, stated that the base budget for the hospitals should be $3,160,000, $549,000 more than the amount the province was providing. As well, a study undertaken by the province and the Ontario Hospital Association identified HHHS as one of the most underfunded hospital services in the province.

HHHS executive director, Foster Loucks, was pleased with the announcement noting there were programs being implemented by the board where the funds could be used. "This money will help us address the new nursing position we have created to help ease the problem of ensuring we have a nurse on-call," Loucks said. Recently the board agreed to create another nursing position. The nurse is scheduled to work an eight hour shift and be on call for transfers or to assist in other ways for the remaining 16 hours in that day. The process would ensure that at least one additional nurse is available when needed.

"Another pressure point," Loucks said, "is the new cardiac markers diagnosis which is being used at the two emergency departments." The test is easy to administer and, according to Loucks, is an ideal tool in a rural hospital setting, but it is expensive. It is estimated that implementing it will cost $40,000. The test reveals whether a patient has suffered a heart attack.

Loucks said the board is also strug-

(more on page 3)

Y2-AOK

Whether it was a result of careful preparations or more hype than reality, the new year was welcomed throughout the area with no noticeable disruptions. Electrical services were uninterrupted, the phone system continued to operate, the fears of a system melt-down evaporated with the midnight celebrations.

The Ontario Provincial Police in Haliburton and Victoria Counties report nothing unusual during the transition to the new millennium. Other than dealing with a few over-enthusiastic revellers, the police had no Y2K issues to deal with. Detachments in both areas had extra officers on duty.

Likewise, municipalities reported nothing out of the ordinary. Township staff, including firemen, were on stand-by Friday evening and Saturday morning, but, except for a house fire in Minden, there was little for them to do.

New year's eve blaze levels Scotch Line home

A new year's eve fire has destroyed the retirement home of Brian and Lucy Gray. The house is located on Scotch Line Road, just west of Highway 35, north of Minden.

Firemen were called to the house at 7:30 p.m. after an alarm was turned in by a neighbour from across the street. They arrived on the scene to find the structure engulfed in flames. To augment supplies in their tanks, the firemen pumped water from a pond in front of next door neighbour Brian Hamilton's home, to fight the blaze.

According to Minden Fire Chief, the fire appeared to have started in the attached garage area and swept into the house. The firefighters were called back to the scene later in the night to extinguish a flare-up within the charred remains of the structure.

There was no one home at the time of the fire. According to the chief, the couple had left several hours earlier to attend a New Year's Eve celebration in Toronto. Lucy Gray is Nancy Garbutt's sister. According to her husband, Jim Garbutt, while the couple lived in the city, they had plans to retire to the home later this year. He said the wood stove in the structure was not in use.

"It appears to have been just one of those things that happens," Garbutt said. "Fortunately nobody was hurt."

Members of the Minden Fire department were scheduled to be on call later that evening in anticipation of potential Y2K problems. Chief Bill Hogg said no one was injured fighting the blaze. No estimate of the damage was available.

The chief planned to return to the house Saturday morning in an attempt to determine the cause of the fire.

BEECH LAKE BLAZE: Firefighter Tony Aymong signals for water as Captain Nigel Atkinson advances on a Beech Lake fire that consumed four generations of memories on December 27. *(Photo and article by Carol Moffatt)*

Fire destroys Stanhope cottage

Fire swept through a Beech Lake cottage last week, destroying four generations of memories and leaving a young family in shock.

David Bergshoeff, 35, had gone ahead to the family's Redner Lane cottage on Boxing Day to prepare for his wife and two daughters, aged five and two. The lifelong cottager went through his usual routine of "opening up" and went to bed, in anticipation of his family's arrival the next morning.

"I got up, had a coffee and went to the lake to clear the skating rink. I didn't even have breakfast," he said.

While working on the rink Bergshoeff heard what he described as "a loud cracking noise" which made him look toward the cottage.

"I looked up and there was all this smoke and flames at the back porch," he said. Bergshoeff said he tried to enter the cottage through sliding doors at the other end of the building but was driven back by flames rolling across the living room ceiling.

"I ran to the neighbours to call the fire department but all I could think of was 911. Thank god they have the fire department number right above the phone," he said.

Stanhope firefighters stopped the blaze from consuming the entire 50-year-old wood frame structure, but smoke damage was severe and the cottage was called "a write-off".

The cottage, built by Bergshoeff's grandparents in the 1940s, was filled with mementos, photos, and family antiques, most of which have been ruined.

"At least my family's safe. Thank god they weren't here," said Bergshoeff, who said he has mentally traced his steps over and over in an attempt to determine the cause of the fire.

Stanhope Fire Chief John Hogg determined exactly where the fire began, but despite a thorough investigation, was unable to determine the cause of the blaze.

Bergshoeff had working smoke detectors in the cottage; he was too far from the building to hear them.

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